Cassis. Wednesday Oct 1938

I believe Quentin has just been writing you a long letter so mine may seem superfluous. still I daresay it would do just as well. Letters have a way of not getting posted here. However I'm afraid if I don't write you may not do anything so I can't think what a job you'd have if your letters ark. They are the only human contact with the crisis we have. We generally get the Times a day late & French papers of course - but we really know very little from papers. Your accounts of your day in London made us all quite hysterical - as indeed most people in London seem to have been. I don't wonder. It sounded terrifying having trenches & sand bags everywhere - what good do trenches do by the way? Are they really a protection? And the mattresses in your studio - were they to sleep in if the bombs fell? Sorry any room it was about the most exposed bit of the house. We hope to know a great deal more. For one thing Lord Clive has taken it all - he's not written at all & we think he must be crowing about his pet M. C. Also whether he had to house it after the house hundreds of refugees at Charleston - & what about Julian - I suppose we shall never hear all we want to till we return. But any scraps are welcome - We were fascinated too by your mixed news from Harold - who has I see been getting into hot water in the Times. Don't forget to send the N.S. It really Raymonds videos sound a bit fantastic. I often wonder how anyone

at all can have any views about politics. My views are changed by any breath of wind. How can one ever know any but the most elementary things or what is the real reason of anything. I don't see how one can be sure that Mrs C. was to blame - it only my general knowledge of human nature that makes me think he very likely may have been. But then I can't say I should have put much faith in anyone I can think of on the other side - As for looking ahead 6 months how can one possibly do in nowadays. As you'll see my only real feelings are relief that for the moment we're not at war & that Nevs are clever in the head. But I didn't think Mr Black was - much. Here we lead as usual an almost purely animal existence We didn't actually forget the advent of winter time but as I set it the wrong way round & put my watch according to my ideas we were 2 hours early most of the day. But perhaps Queenie told you this as it was I thought to discredit it. We have very little touch with the outer world however. For the last two days the village has been giving in, which is an incredibly busy sight. I'd never been in the midst of it before. The people wear such colours & some are superb creatures & they tend to set into wonderful poses carrying great buckets full of grapes, emptying them into enormous tubs which the men carry to a cart, stooping to cut the bunches, etc. The grapes themselves make one feel as if the land were flowing with riches,

they lie in masses everywhere & everyone eats what they like - they take mouthfuls out of the bunches as the fancy takes them & then throw the bunch into the tub & so on to another - Duncan & I were discussing them desperately about trying to do sketches - but it needs working out. It is a pity you aren't here I can't help thinking. But I expect you will make up your mind to come just as we return. Quentin saw the Maurys as he was here too you - & is going there again next Sunday when he will find the rest. As for Helen I don't know what she means to do. The political crisis has made her ill when I last heard. But she was recovering. She talked of coming to St Reiny, but I daresay won't. Van. My own nationality is very limited & almost entirely visual. Such brains as we may have are in a bad way. We haven't even many books & such as we have are of a curious nature, such as the works of Mrs Molesworth which I used to read to Angelica when we first came here & a good many Everyman volumes, most of which are read to pieces. Sometimes I think I must try to get hold of some others but it is not easy & we seem to get on without. Quentin has Maine's new novel. Have you read it & what do you think of it? I wonder whether things are becoming normal again

in the book world & whether there is any chance at all for Julian's book. By the way I must give some copies to various people - Can I give you a list of them? I suppose if I do they can just be sent by the Press when the book comes out & the bill be sent to me.

Helen Anrep. 86 Charlotte Street.
Mrs Pirie. 12 Glisson Road. Cambridge.
Eddy Playfair. I don't know his new address but 21 High Street would find him
Maurice. Mrs d'Arcy. St Remy Bdx.

I have also two second copies to Chinese but I don't know where second lot got. I may think of some others later. I hope it will not be boring through you.

Now this long dull letter must stop. I think it hardly deserves an answer but don't give me any desire

[signature]

Jean Campbell speaks with the greatest affection of Anne & Richard - especially R. Did you hear how Karin & Judith were upset with the sea when a canoe & boy to swim - Karin in a hat -

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(1938)

La Bergere. Oct 14

The family was enraptured by your last letter. I only
Phyllis said it could go on for ever - I had to read
it aloud twice over. So you see, modest though
we don't- you are, you still have some success if
you want- more you know where to look for it.
As for your account of the arrival of the Boys it
simply made us squirm. We cannot be thankful
enough that we escaped them. But are they
camping at America or where? Mrs C. is known
here in Cornwall herself. Anyhow it sounds quite
appalling. Of course if we lived here long enough the
same sort of thing would happen here - as indeed it
used to. But nowadays one really spends days of
delightful solitude - I cannot tell you what a relief
it is. Of course I am the most hermit like of the
family - if it depended on me we should literally
never see a soul. As it is the rest of the family
love playing tricks. The French turn of bowls. I do they
have a habit of going to Cassis of an evening. Where they
have picked up a young man called Hare - a writer who
has I believe produced a biography of Rimbaud - He's harmless
rather nice in fact - Also Dick Strachey & his young
woman are living in Cassis & one day even came up
here but I did not see them. It's quite unnecessary to
see anyone & one has no telephone - We all spend
most of the day painting. In the evening we play
poker & read aloud - with some difficulty as our
library is so small. The only people we see are the
peasants picking the grapes. Who are much pleasanter
to meet than your friend Sybil - I am occasional
glimpse of the reds. But they are so busy they simply
want to be left alone. Queen Mary [illegible] in Wednesday

Hes going to spend 2 nights with the Mannors & will get back about the 28th or 5th I think. Helen looses slightly. Thats to say the talks of staying with the Mannors for a possibly coming back for a night or two. But I dont know when. She takes a very gloomy view of the Mrs. but her gloomy views arent always accurate. The Charles Charles is desperately in love with the Helen girl, Vivian, & that Marie is very unhappy about it. I must say Quentin saw no signs of it when he was here but I daresay he would. If you do write can you come & see them at Rottingdean & wait till March - the worst month of all for visitors. It has been absolutely calm here ever since we came - one or two slightly windy days but nothing worse than one often gets in England & for the most part its like hot summer weather. We have lunch on the terrace & we could sit in the sun all day. This is almost the most beautiful moment for with the vines turning crimson - the elms at night but we havent yet wanted fires. So why not come now? It may easily go on like this till January - but after that the winds tend to rise. Talking of winds we have terrible accounts of the damage at Charleston - our garden wall all blown down, pear trees ruined in consequence. & tool shed also blown down. Grace says we look as if we had been bombed.

I had a letter from Helen giving me her account of the crisis in London - evidently she was terribly upset - Its interesting to see how people were affected at this distance. I shall collect many observations. Bell the only person who sounds as if he'd come out badly is.

Kingsley Martin who really seems too hysterical both in life & in print. We enjoyed the N.S. & Nation's present views. Thought it true? or have any semblance of truth in it? It all sounds very depressing & as if our relief at escaping wasn't going to last long. One's only hope is that no one really can take anything at all. or so it seems to me.

I know Clive has gone to Paris. We were intrigued by your account of Lydia's behaviour. Clive himself told me he had been asked to tea by you but wasn't going as Janice is painting his portrait & he wanted to give her all the daylight possible. but that may have been a mere pretence. Still I don't see why they couldn't come in their own. Janice is really more harmless than Lydia I think.

Dear me, I wish I knew what you were saying about Roger. I meant to give you the P.I. catalogue but never did. However I don't suppose it would have been much use. But you know one did read Cézanne & also French Art & I quite agree that he was the only great critic who ever lived. of painting anyhow. But I think it needs the rarest of all combinations to make a great critic - great or anyhow good artists are far commoner. No one else comes anywhere near him. Perhaps however I can't really judge for I find anyone else too boring to read. I hope you won't mind making us all blush. it won't do any harm & anyhow we won't blush for long. The old Trip may perish even before we do & in any case the only important thing is to tell the truth for the sake of future younger generations. What are they like?

in the person of Richard & Ann? I suppose they
haven't much aesthetic sense which is a pity. Or has
Richard any? I have had very interesting scraps
of conversation with Angelica about her swing up the
stage & taking the brush - how she can't think
where she is to hang it, but she enjoyed
the W Bells school immensely & we think &
then I think being so much in the midst of
painters gave her a good deal of what she wanted
without the need to practise the art herself. But
he's doing rather remarkable things now & & I
think getting very much absorbed in it - if only he
would wide about anyone & he is -

Well as I have to mend five minutes quite
enough - I'd like to see John Constable book before
I write & send it. I can get it when I return.
Thank you for giving my list & address. I think
Jane must be added & it - she'll be v. sorry to hear
it - so could you have me sent & her at 40 Rue
Verdi. Nice.

If you want compliments for your pamphlet
take plain

Yours VW

Out 15 Monday your books just came for which we are very
much also glad to hear pamphlet - what is thought of it?
no good I expect.

1938

La Berger

Oct 27 or 28

See how obedient I am. I'll try to give you first hand evidence about the Borough Polytechnic by return of post - But first to deal with the question of Helen. which sounds to me desperate. I feel we ought to do something about it if it was not to the shape of having no servant - She'll certainly make herself ill & will get into a vicious circle. I daresay Leonard ought to go into their money affairs & draw up a table of expenditure for them. Meanwhile however do you think we ought to set up a subscription? If so, would it be possible for you, as you are in touch with her, to apply to Nancy without letting Helen know - She's very rich now & would probably produce something. Duncan & I would subscribe & we might be able to think of others - Then I believe the best way might be simply to get her bank to write & say that a certain sum had been placed to her credit - I suspect that she has got her overdraft on her nerves - Very likely it isn't really very large. If it were once paid off she could restrain herself so as she has done till now spending about what she has. I think she spent an absurd amount on that party last year & has never recovered from it. But it can't be only that - Anyhow please let me know what you think as you seem to be in the thick of it & we will act accordingly

You need to linger think of us in the heat of the vineyards which so nearly (you say) tempted you to leave your husband's side - not that I ever expected you to do so for a moment - We have had days of rain & darkness & even cold evenings & have taken to a fire at nights & painting indoors. In fact if it goes on I suppose we shall think of London again. Anyhow the drive back will not be so enjoyable if we wait very much longer. So I may be on you before you expect it.

Quentin should be back today or tomorrow so I expect quite see him soon. Last night we had Dick Strachey (brother of Spotty John) & his young woman called Francette to dinner. He has moments of being very much a Strachey but I should say has suffered from being a younger member of that family & rather expects to be snubbed & despised. When he finds he can't he becomes quite intelligent & rather nice. The young woman unfortunately is pretty in a way which wears off in about 5 minutes & is dull & tiresome. That is all the society we have had - you see how poorly it compares with yours. Dick talked a great deal about Tommy whom he advised & whether he had an illegitimate son by Barbara & whether Farrow committed suicide or not & all sorts of dark scandals in which we could (we hope) implicate a good deal of information. So I hope they enjoyed themselves.

Now about the Polytechnic. The only information I can give you is scanty - Duncan can't remember his name - it hardly necessary to say but an old friend of Roger's produced the money for the decoration of a room at the BP by young artists. Duncan, Eltchaks, Adeney, Mark Gill. Albert Rothenstein & Roger himself did scenes from the amusements of London. Roger's was a scene at the Zoo. Giraffes & elephants I think. Not very good. He was editing the Burlington at the time & didn't really work very hard at it - It was that last summer. 1911. when we were at Guildford & he used to come in & tell me how it was going on & was very communicative especially about Duncan & Eltchaks. Duncan's were for the test really awful - He have been whitewashed ever since I believe. Of course they were in the height of the Post Imp. movement. Which, that is not very useful or interesting. But I hope you are getting on & disregarding deaf Agnes & all the others.

We went to Auberge today & ate such lovely pots that I wished I could bring a few home to England. But no doubt it would be a foolish thing to do.

By the way the Leeds say we are to have this house for another 18 months - it's really quite comfortable now, rather bare which is nice but with quite enough of the essentials of life. So if it suited you to come here any time it isn't let you could easily do so. You'd be quite within striking distance of Charles who might come & stay a night or so here if you wanted him to I should think. Or you could dine here quite easily without having to stay here if you didn't want to. Anyhow I throw out the suggestion for what it is worth. It's really nicer than being in a hotel & you might like it for your spring jaunt.

Clive & I suppose back at 50 which he says he certainly means to leave before long. Though if the house remains in Adrian's hands, which still seems to be uncertain, he will try to do whatever is easiest for him. But if he does leave I really think the most sensible plan might be to try to find a house which could be divided, so that he could have the lower & principal floors & we the upper ones - if we could make at least one decent studio - Of course we'd have to be quite separate. But the present arrangement is really ridiculously expensive. & now that Angelica needn't be attached to the theatre we could perhaps have less of an establishment in London & be more at Charleston & Firle altogether. So if you come across the right kind of house not too remote but cheaper & smaller than Gordon Square in your wanderings you might note it down. It's all so vague still, I daresay

it betters not to talk of the world at large about the possibility. I suppose the young want London & people & it wouldn't do to make it too difficult for them - but I really get to dislike it more & more & it seems silly always to spend more than we can afford on being there. When we don't want Colefax & Co & subjects we have very little there use for them.

If you're seeing Sherwood I wonder if you heard anything about Sue & Julian's pupil Gch. Both of whom he met in Hankow. Gch's last address was in Hankow but now of course it would be useless to write there. Sue I think is safe in the country somewhere & I suppose letters may possibly reach her.

Duncan has been reading Benny's memoirs which you sent & is slowly wandering through it, backwards he says - I've read the Irish book. so highly praised by Morgan. I can't say the Irish are very sympathetic to me somehow but it seemed to me rather good all the same - Really we do read quite a lot, having nothing else to do in the evenings now that Quentin won't bear to make us play poker. But I won't favour you with any more literary criticisms. This is only to show you that your books were appreciated.

If you should ever be able to send the parish mag. again we should enjoy seeing at Martin & all our friends. However the wind is howling & I think it's quite likely we shall start homewards in about 10 days or a fortnight

Love VB

La Berarde Nov. 6 (1938)

As you say you want to know about your school commitments I am answering at once to let you what I can. Yes. You said you guarantee £30 a year for 2 years I think, of which the first 8 months about is over. As far as I know there is very little chance of you being called on to pay any of it. At the end of the summer when we went into accounts they had paid their rent up to October & had some in hand. & now I hear that they have more new pupils. They should have fewer expenses this year so I think there is every reason to hope they'll make a little - in any case the rent will be the first charge & should be easily payable out of earnings. However I don't really see why you should lend Helen so much - lending it is a different matter as I expect there is very much chance of her being able to pay you back. I didn't know she had withdrawn so much. Could she be asked to lend some? The school repaid her most of all of what she had lent them - £30 I think - & she must be rolling in money with her BBC job. Perhaps H. would like us to be asked Duncan & I are quite ready to contribute as I said before - I had a letter from

Helen letting me off your debt in spite of gratitude She talked of coming to the Reunion tom. if the does I suppose we shall just miss her as I think we shall start back next Sunday. We shall drive to Paris in 2 or 3 days I expect & then spend a couple of days there. So we shall be altogether about a week en route -

I got Julian's book just after I had written to ask John to send me 2 copies back (Jean wants one) I wonder what if any effect it will have on people - It is impossible to tell myself - in fact I haven't been able to bring myself to look at it yet really - I rather dread seeing the letter to myself actually in a book. But I am glad you think it was a good thing to print them

We are now trying to prepare for departure - finish sketches, tidy up, get the house into a lettable state again what a lot of time one seems to spend doing such things. It seems absurd to leave though I imagine you having much the same weather in England But here it's almost too hot in the sun & the air is full of butterflies & insect life - a praying mantis sits on our post - & the vines are the most amazing colours I ever saw. I expect tops will begin in London as soon as we return. Still I think America wants to get

back to all her friends & would like to work from models with people of her own age & Duncan misses Scotstoun if he is away too long. I shall be glad to see Charleston again then & I imagine it in ruins with the garden wall blown down. As for you, I see me with never yet a glimpse of you with the life you lead - & Coletoxi's party was evidently such a success that you will find yourself going to lots more. I wonder if the ladies of Aspley Guise have climbed & been borne & risen a horse-warming party yet? It's just happened here & I only hope I shall be away at the time But I shall stick to my habit of no parties for all his works.

Did you know that Karin really might quite easily have been drowned here in the summer? She went out alone to sea in a rubber canoe & toppled out of it, much too far out & swimming ashore & if some fishermen hadn't seen her & gone & rescued she certainly would have perished But apparently she made nothing of it.

Well as you see life holds no [illegible] interest to tell you - visit life & views is all our lives consist of. Mine at any rate - the others enjoy an evening visit & the cafe-

next days Tomorrow we are going for a
jaunt to Marseilles to do some final shoppings
for the house etc & Duncan is very virtuously
going to see Brieal which will be a painful
affair as he cant speak at all I believe
having had a stroke some time ago. We shall
see the scene of the great fire - nasty else
was talked of here for some days & the scandal
of having no water & no pipes for which the
mayor was blamed.

Write here time to write once
more if you feel so kindly disposed -
after that if you want to get at us
the Hotel de Londres Paris will be the best
place I suppose Yours

(190)

(1939
1940?)

8, Fitzroy Street,
W.1.
Museum 5596.

May 31

As usual I can do nothing against your wiles. But how you & Duncan & Angelica ever managed & put your heads together & this purpose I cant imagine. I see I shall have & work like a nigger for 80 hours & write down every minute of it à la Leonard. Really - you shouldnt do such things. Think of Helen. She'll want another 100 or 2 before long I feel sure. But it's no good complaining - I have & accept with gratitude in spite of all.

Think of me on Saturday going off & spend with Clive. Well. it's better than going for Christmas. But the business of getting myself into some sort of order first is appalling. I wish we were at Charleston still. Only the noise there on Thursday was too much. Nothing has happened since we returned & London. Duncan has gone off & Twickenham & take his mother & a

military concert. I am alone & listening to La Traviata, I expect too late a taste for you

I will send back your story as you want it - but I'd like to read it again first - It seems to me lovely - very too full of suggestions for pictures almost. They leap into my mind at every turn. Your unity always does that for me to some extent, but I think this me more than usual. I wonder if I could do anything sleigh - I fear I should come a cropper by comparison, which might be mistake because I could hardly help doing illustrations - However I'd like to try & see what happens -

How does one pronounce Ivimey? & why Ivimey? But don't think me frivolous - I really only wish I could live up to it

Yours VB

c/ The Searchlight in A Haunted House (1943)
(Mr Ivimey)

T. PARSONS 3.2.23